

Look for the stuffed mule; it's a must see for any visit to Elloreë. And it's just one of the charms of this revived small town in the heart of South Carolina's Santee Cooper Country.

Small Town Downtown is Doing Just Fine

By Marc Rapport

Elloreë sits just a few miles off Interstate 95 and not far from Interstate 26. Like many, if not most small towns across South Carolina and much of America, its downtown had once seen better days.

Now, however, a grassroots effort has sparked Elloreë's revival. Antique shops, restaurants and cafés (that include a widely popular Thai establishment), and the Elloreë Museum & Cultural Center (home to the taxidermic mule) now line the streets, recalling the classic look of a thriving village of days once thought gone.

The renaissance of Elloreë "was definitely a vision of a few citizens back in the '90s that became a grassroots movement and resulted in the renovation of the entire downtown," says Mayor Van Stickles.

"That renovation has spurred on many other things, such as festivals and even more new stores and restaurants coming in," says Stickles, a retired director of the South Carolina State Park Service who now runs a traveling barbecue business. "And we now have a first-class museum that shares the history of agriculture and more attractions of this area."

Helping things along are the Elloreë horse racing trials each spring, which, while outside town limits, "are always one of the biggest things we have going on every year," the mayor says.

"We're also seeing a lot of residential growth in the area, especially going towards the lake," Stickles said.

The lake is Lake Marion, one of the two Santee Cooper lakes. Covering more than 100,000 acres, the lakes have long been an outdoor paradise, attracting fishermen from across the Eastern United States seeking trophy bass, stripers and catfish.

Proximity also works in Elloreë's favor. The town of approximately 700 residents is about halfway between Columbia and Charleston and situated near two major interstate highways. Day trips to Elloreë are popular, as are stays at the hotels at the nearby Santee exit on I-95 and in the cabins and campgrounds at Santee State Park.

"We're small-town America at its best," Stickles says proudly.



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Turn to page 139 in the "green pages" for more on the Elloreë Old Town District.

